



## Management Brief

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TO: Mayor Lee and Bellevue City Councilmembers

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*Planning and Community Development*

SUBJECT: Bellevue Essentials Synopsis

This is for information only, no action is required.

**Background:** Bellevue Essentials was launched September 25, 2013 to provide an on ramp for emerging leaders in Bellevue to learn about the nuts and bolts of government. Over the past nine weeks, these leaders benefited from hearing from City Councilmembers, department leadership and staff. A combination of lecture, tours and interactive exercises allowed class members to learn about government process, decision making and major city initiatives. This was a successful One City effort.

**Key program goals:**

- Expose participants to the structure and inner workings of City government in many arenas.
- Have class members achieve a comfort level participating in City government and build familiarity with government process and decision making.
- Expand diverse learning community that will be accessible to the City for future civic engagement opportunities.

Bellevue Essentials has served as a formal orientation to potential new leaders. The first graduating class of 28 individuals is well informed, has built relationships with each other and with City staff and leadership, and has acquired a knowledge base that will make them informed and engaged residents.

**Class Profile: 28 members**

- 17 female, 11 male
- Representative of 15 of Bellevue's neighborhood areas (Woodridge absent)
- Ethnically diverse including people of Asian, Indian, African American, Russian, and Hispanic heritage.
- Professionally diverse, including those employed in non-profit, government, health, tech industries, retail, business, and volunteer arenas.
- Range in age from 17 to 70, with over half under age 40.
- For the 2013 class, 65 applications were requested, 41 applications received, 30 class members accepted and 11 placed on a waiting list. Priority was given to Bellevue residents.

**Curriculum:**

Bellevue Essentials hosted nine class sessions on Wednesday evenings from 6-8:30pm and a Saturday session from 9am-3pm. Class sessions included a light dinner, and a combination of speakers, site visits, skills training and interactive exercises. Each session focused on one or two topic areas. Sessions were held on the following topics: History and demographics, the arts, diversity, parks and neighborhoods, public process, boards and commissions, planning, finance and budget, transportation and traffic, public safety, development services and mediation.

**Session highlights included:**

- Tours of Parks and Neighborhoods, including neighborhood tours of Bridle Trails, Enatai and Newport Hills led by neighborhood leaders
- Mock planning commission meeting
- Simulation exercise in the Emergency Operations Center
- Tour of the traffic operations center
- Tour of the forensics lab
- Citizens budget academy exercise
- Land use exercise on neighborhood shopping centers.

**Evaluation:**

A thorough evaluation process was done with the 28 class members. Data will be used to make changes and improvements to the 2014 program. Class members have suggested some changes to schedule, timing and topics that will be useful for planning next year's program. This year's class sessions consistently received high marks on weekly evaluations. On a 5 point scale, all sessions averaged between 4 and 5. Comments from class members consistently praised high level of content and staff presentation and organization.

A few comments from class members on the impact of Bellevue Essentials:

- "I learned so much, I can't wait to share it with others in my neighborhood and my community."
- "The City now seems approachable and transparent."
- "I gained confidence. Now I know who to call, where to go and how to address issues."
- "I so appreciated the Council members coming and talking with us."
- "I'm inspired. I want to be part of a larger community and continue my civic engagement."
- "Being foreign born, in our culture, we would never learn how government functions. Now I know government is accessible and I gained confidence to work with the government."
- "This experience transformed me from being an observer to being a participant."

Throughout the program, class members have been introduced to civic engagement opportunities throughout the City. An alumni network will meet periodically to help maintain the class connections and to track individual community involvement over time. The first meeting will be in May, 2014 in conjunction with recruitment for the 2014 class.

The Bellevue Essentials graduation event on November 13 featured a keynote address from Rob McKenna, the 17<sup>th</sup> Attorney General of Washington, who spoke on the importance of civic leadership. Councilmember Claudia Balducci and acting City Manager Brad Miyake presented the graduation certificates. The evening celebrated a new class of civic leaders who embraced the charge of government "of the people, by the people, for the people" and are excited to serve Bellevue in new ways.

The next Bellevue Essentials class is scheduled for September – November, 2014.